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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-first session

Summary record of the 1317th meeting*
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 14 July 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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* No summary records were issued for the 1315th and 1316th meetings.

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Velasco Condori** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that for the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the attainment of equality between men and women was an element of the task of meeting the historical challenge of creating a democratic and productive society committed to comprehensive development and the self-determination of peoples. The Government's approach to discrimination against women was integrated into the National Development Plan, which defined the "Good Life" policy on the basis of a cosmic vision, the recognition of many identities, and the realization, in harmony with mother earth, of a genuine and effective form of inclusion governed by the people.

3. Eighty-eight women had participated in the Constituent Assembly of 2006, most of them indigenous women in the front lines of the movement against neoliberalism, who had contributed, at the request of their *ayllus*, or traditional indigenous communities, to the creation of a new vision and a new society. The adoption of the new Constitution in 2009, on the basis of a constitutional referendum, had marked the first step in the construction of the Plurinational State. One of the first measures taken by the Plurnational State had been the establishment of the new transitional electoral regime, which had engaged the full population of voting age in the elections of late 2009, and had brought President Evo Morales Ayma to power. He had chosen a Cabinet made up of 50 per cent women; as of 2015 the composition of the Plurinational Assembly was also 50 per cent women, placing Bolivia in the gender parity vanguard.

4. The new Constitution stipulated that the State should promote the ethical and moral principles of a plural society, namely *ama qhilla, ama llulla, ama suwa* (don't be lazy, don't be a liar, don't be a thief), *suma qamaña* (live well), *ñandereco* (harmonious life), *teko kavi* (good life), *ivi maraei* (land without evil) and *qhapaj ñan* (noble path or life). It would be grounded in the values, inter alia, of unity, equality, dignity, liberty, solidarity, reciprocity, respect, harmony, transparency, and social and gender equity, as well as in social justice, and the distribution and redistribution of social products and goods, for the attainment of a good life.

5. The Constitution also defined decolonization as a tool for the construction of a new society without discrimination or exploitation, and with full social justice. Within that process, public policy was predicated on the concepts of decolonization and the elimination of patriarchy, under the National Equal Opportunity Plan: Women Building the New Bolivia to Live Well. That policy was informed by "Live Well" principles, which aimed at removing obstacles to the advancement of women and the construction of a society free of hierarchies and in harmony with nature.

6. Under that plan, women were not regarded as a vulnerable group but as one half of the population that had become vulnerable as a result of the neoliberal system. New legislation guaranteed women a life free of violence, and also established mechanisms and measures to protect women in situations of violence and to punish the perpetrators. Protection mechanisms included shelters for women, children and adolescents who were the victims of physical, sexual or psychological aggression. The shelters promoted self-help, self-awareness, autonomy, protection and the restitution

of rights, and instituted social, legal, psychological, health and labour-related measures on behalf of victims.

7. The new society of the Plurinational State of Bolivia sought full social justice and the "Good Life" for both men and women, breaking with the capitalist, colonial and patriarchal past.

8. **Ms. Suxo Iturry** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the Committee had expressed concern at the lack of institutional stability and a comprehensive gender mainstreaming policy. Bolivia now had a National Equal Opportunity Plan, which was fully described in the report and had been implemented at all departmental and municipal levels.

9. The Committee had also been concerned that women had insufficient access to land, housing and basic services. Bolivia could now report that the land rights of women were covered in a cross-cutting manner by the Constitution, which established that land grants for women must respect their right to ownership without discrimination on the basis of civil or marital status. As for the right to water and housing, the Executive Unit for Emergency Housing had been set up to provide housing solutions for populations affected by natural disasters; the programme had helped 10,000 families, and women in particular.

10. The Committee had recommended strengthening the poverty reduction strategy: the goal of eliminating extreme poverty had been met in 2009.

11. The Committee had recommended that the State party should strengthen its efforts to implement nationwide effective educational programmes in the area of functional literacy. In 2008, the country had declared itself to be free from illiteracy; it was estimated that eight out of ten persons who had achieved literacy were women. In that regard, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had said that Bolivia had made the second greatest investment in education and culture of all Latin American countries.

12. The Committee had been concerned that the Afro-Bolivian community was socially invisible and marginalized, in particular Afro-Bolivian women: the Constitution forbade all forms of discrimination based on sex, origin and other factors.

13. The Committee had urged the State party to create the necessary conditions for poor, rural and indigenous women to have access to justice and to enhance women's legal literacy where appropriate, in the relevant languages. A law had been adopted for the purpose of recognizing the indigenous languages as official languages, and integrating them into all administrative systems, public and private, and into all public educational, health, justice and communications services.

14. The Committee had called on the State party to expedite the registration of women, particularly indigenous women in rural areas, older women and women with disabilities, and issue birth certificates and the relevant identity documents. In that regard, the civil registration procedures had been simplified, and birth certificates and identity cards had been issued for women receiving the Juana Azurduy subsidy.

15. The Committee had asked the State party to formulate and implement legislation on domestic and sexual violence against women, giving priority to a comprehensive strategy to combat all forms of violence, to punish perpetrators and to protect and care for victims. Comprehensive Act No. 348, to Guarantee Women a Life Free of Violence, and its regulatory decree, had brought progress, in particular the allocation of more resources for the eradication of gender violence, and the construction of shelters for women.

16. The Committee had urged the State party to accelerate the achievement of the substantive equality of women in all areas covered by the Convention. In that regard, men and women were now equally represented in the Plurinational Legislative Assembly. In addition, the Supreme Electoral Court had guaranteed parity for Deputies and Senators in the 2014 elections, by requiring that 50 per cent of the candidates on the electoral lists of political parties should be women. In addition, a group of women higher court judges had launched a gender equality policy project, which called for the establishment of a gender department and a gender observatory.

17. The Committee had also asked the State party to adopt the draft law against political harassment of women; in that regard, the Human Rights Council had recently recognized that Bolivia, through its Political Harassment and Violence against Women Act, stood at the forefront of efforts to combat that form of violence.

18. There were a number of other matters that her delegation wished to bring to the attention of the Committee. The universal maternal and infant insurance scheme and the free old-age medical insurance scheme were still operational. In addition, a draft law on sexual and reproductive rights was being developed with the participation of women's organizations. Work was also being done on the Comprehensive Plurinational System to prevent, address, punish and eliminate gender-based violence. Under Comprehensive Act No. 348, femicide was punishable by 30 years in prison; the first femicide conviction had been handed down in recent days.

19. The Children's and Young Person's Code had been adopted in 2014, guaranteeing girls and boys the full enjoyment of their rights under conditions of equality and equity, in accordance with the Constitution and the relevant international human rights instruments. Moreover, the income redistribution programmes had contributed to the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights and to combating extreme poverty.

20. The rights of indigenous persons were a fundamental part of the national agenda. The draft law on prior, free and informed consent would promote and protect their collective rights. In that regard, the Law on Mining and Metallurgy had been adopted, which recognized the right of the indigenous peoples to share in the benefits arising from resources found on their own territories.

21. Regarding access to justice, a national judicial summit was to be held in 2015. Preparatory workshops were under way, involving diverse sectors of the population. The results of the summit would be the subject of a national referendum.

22. The Bolivian Government had made considerable progress in bringing about structural reforms over the previous seven years with a view to improving its implementation of the Convention. It was important to understand that the commitments of the Government went well beyond compliance with an international instrument. In fact, the new Constitution promised greater protection for the human rights of women than did the international instruments to which the country was a party.

23. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** congratulated the State party on its Constitution of 2009, which was one of several new Latin American constitutions giving pre-eminence to human rights. Concerned, however, about the gap between the law and its application, she wondered what were the fundamental challenges to implementing the precepts of the Constitution. She also wondered if sufficient resources were allocated for that purpose, whether Convention principles were shared with all sectors of the population, especially women, and what measures had been adopted to protect women on ancestral lands from the invasion of their habitat.

24. **Ms. Pimentel**, while also commending the Government's admirable efforts to advance women's rights, observed that there was a discrepancy between law and practice in Bolivia. For example, although Comprehensive Act No. 348 called for special courts for women, in practice those courts also dealt with other matters.

25. **Ms. Cornejo Quevedo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the Government had taken a number of steps to disseminate the different laws protecting women's rights. The General Directorate for the Prevention and Elimination of All Forms of Gender and Generational Violence, which was the operational unit of the Office of the Deputy Minister for Equal Opportunity, had launched campaigns to raise awareness of the existence of those laws so that women could fully assert their rights. Several women's organizations had assisted the Government in that endeavour. A document outlining the Government's efforts to promote and protect the rights of indigenous women had been published in 2014. Moreover, a research paper containing an assessment of the implementation of the Comprehensive Act to Guarantee Women a Life Free of Violence (Act No. 348) in rural areas would in the near future be submitted to the competent authorities and made available to the public. The paper would form the basis of future community-based initiatives to prevent violence against women and to safeguard their rights.

26. **Ms. Velasco Condori** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that specialized courts dealing with cases involving violence against women had been set up in a number of provinces and in some major cities. The courts employed lawyers, prosecutors and judges with a wide range of expertise. A national summit had been held to discuss the overhaul of the current justice system. One of the shortcomings identified at the summit was the insufficient number of specialized courts dealing with cases involving violence against women. As a result of the summit, more specialized courts would be set up throughout the country to ensure that as many women as possible had access to justice.

27. **Ms. Cornejo Quevedo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the anti-corruption courts had been merged with the specialized courts dealing with cases involving violence against women to provide an urgent response to that problem. The Government and the Council of the Judiciary were examining the possibility of once again setting up separate courts for cases involving corruption. The Council of the Judiciary was also developing an inter-institutional policy on gender equality for the justice system.

28. **Ms. Pimentel** asked whether the Council of the Judiciary planned to modify the current governance structure of the courts; whether the State party had developed a comprehensive training programme on women's rights and gender issues targeting those working in the judiciary; whether such a course could also be taught in university law faculties; what practical steps had been taken to improve the functioning of the judiciary; and whether the penalties prescribed for homophobic crimes were sufficiently dissuasive.

29. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked how the introduction of drastic economic reform measures had affected the enjoyment of women's economic, social and cultural rights.

30. **Ms. Suxo Iturry** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that there was a pressing need to overhaul the Bolivian justice system and that the national summit had provided a valuable opportunity to discuss how best to achieve that objective. The overhaul was intended to restore and guarantee the independence of the judiciary and to expedite the administration of justice. However, it was also necessary to recruit highly trained legal professionals to ensure the effective functioning of the newly reformed legal system. It was regrettable that not all those who received training on women's rights and gender issues subsequently took up posts within the judiciary. The

Government was aware of the need to allocate additional resources to the State Judge's School to ensure that future judges received such training as part of their studies. It had also been decided that appointments to positions within the judiciary should be exclusively merit-based. Furthermore, many university law faculties were already offering courses on human rights.

31. Unfortunately, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community enjoyed little protection in the country. The Government had launched a programme to address the discrimination and challenges faced by that community. There were few civil society organizations working in the area of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights but their work was nonetheless important, as it served to raise public awareness of the plight of those individuals. The Government could find it useful to discuss best practices in improving the situation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community with the governments of other countries in the region. While there would undoubtedly be opposition to expanding the rights of that community, the Government remained committed to upholding the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Constitution.

32. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that the State party was to be commended on its efforts to strengthen the different institutions responsible for achieving gender equality. However, the Committee still had some concerns about the capacity of the national machinery for the advancement of women as a whole to achieve that goal. Given that there was no single institution with the mandate or authority to coordinate and monitor the activities of the different institutions responsible for implementing public policies aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, she would be interested to know how the State party harmonized the interventions of those actors in practice. She asked how the State party had measured the effectiveness of all the legal reforms introduced to date and whether the Office of the Deputy Minister for Equal Opportunity and, therefore, the General Directorate for the Prevention and Elimination of All Forms of Gender and Generational Violence, had sufficient financial and human resources to shoulder the burden of implementing the National Equal Opportunity Plan: "Women Building the New Bolivia to Live Well" alone, especially given the broadness of its scope.

33. She requested additional information on the mandate of the Depatriarchalization Unit, which operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. She also wished to know whether the State party intended to establish a Ministry of Women's Affairs or a similar high-level body with sufficient financial and human resources to monitor and assess the implementation of the National Equal Opportunity Plan, and whether the State party had considered introducing gender-sensitive budgeting at the local, provincial and national levels.

34. **Ms. Acar** said that there was evidence to suggest that the new laws combating discrimination against women and protecting their rights were not being effectively implemented, as gender inequality and patriarchal norms remained prevalent in key sectors such as employment, education and health care and in the civil service and the police. She asked whether the State party planned to make more use of temporary special measures to facilitate and accelerate the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the realization of gender equality in the national territory. While the level of women's representation in parliament was high, it remained low in local authorities, public enterprises and the judiciary. She asked how the State party envisaged remedying that situation.

35. The Committee had received reports that the vital role played by the police in combating gender-based violence was often undermined by the patriarchal and discriminatory attitudes that pervaded that institution, and that female police officers were often subjected to abuse and discrimination in the workplace. She asked what

measures the State party intended to take to accelerate gender equality, protect female officers from discrimination and abuse, and increase female officers' prospects of promotion to high-level positions in the security forces. She also wished to know whether any temporary special measures had been put in place to increase the participation of indigenous women in tertiary education, such as scholarships or bursaries.

36. **Ms. Cornejo Quevedo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the General Directorate for the Prevention and Elimination of All Forms of Gender and Generational Violence was the institution responsible for protecting women's rights on the ground. The Government was aware of the perceived fragility of the institution on account of its limited human and financial resources and had taken steps to build its capacity to enable it to implement the National Equal Opportunity Plan more effectively. A newly established council composed of representatives of all the State institutions working in the area of gender equality was in the process of drawing up implementation plans for the new laws combating discrimination against women and protecting their rights. There were also plans to provide judicial officers with training on women's rights and gender issues.

37. **Ms. Suxo Iturry** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that more and more women were occupying high-level positions in the police service and the Armed Forces thanks to the unstinting efforts of the women already working in those institutions and the lobbying of certain civil society organizations. However, many women struggled to gain a promotion or to access such high-level positions because the requirements were much more stringent for them than for their male counterparts. A bill providing for protective measures for female police officers who were subjected to violence or discrimination in the workplace had recently been announced. The bill was expected to include incentives to encourage police officers of both genders to report such incidents. The bill was a welcome development, as female police officers could often be penalized for speaking out.

38. The level of women's participation in the public sector was in fact quite high, as demonstrated by the fact that several large public enterprises were currently led by women. Moreover, despite their humble origins, indigenous women had come to occupy several high-level ministerial positions in the present Government.

39. **Ms. Velasco Condori** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) pointed out that she, as the Minister of Justice, was an example of an indigenous woman from a humble background who had risen to a position of authority. As the Minister of Justice, she visited courts and prosecution services in various provinces and communities to monitor the progress being made in the justice system. An increasing number of young indigenous women were working as judges and occupying important posts in the judiciary, and more and more women were being appointed as ministers.

40. **Ms. Pomeranzi** stressed the importance of gender budgeting and enquired about the State party's approach to allocating economic resources to gender equality.

41. **Ms. Acar** said that the Committee would welcome concrete data on the number of women in the security forces, in decision-making positions in public enterprises and in other areas, such as local government.

42. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez**, noting that some of the statistics contained in the State party's report (CEDAW/C/BOL/5-6) dated from as far back as 2005, reiterated that the Committee needed up-to-date data in order to assess the impact of government policies and programmes. Was the Plurinational State of Bolivia seeking technical assistance with data collection?

43. **Ms. Velasco Condori** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the delegation would provide the Committee with the relevant data within the next 48 hours.

44. **Ms. Cornejo Quevedo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), in response to Ms. Pomeranzi's question about budgeting, said that the Plurinational State of Bolivia regulated the financial system on the basis of equality, solidarity, distribution and equal redistribution of resources. The Ministry of Justice had drafted a proposal to establish budgets for the implementation of gender policies and other initiatives aimed at protecting women and children.

45. **Ms. Acosta Vargas**, noting that legal pluralism had been recognized under the Constitution, asked in which forums customary law was discussed and how legal pluralism was explained to indigenous women. The Plurinational State of Bolivia had an education policy aimed at eliminating cultural stereotypes. Would that policy have an impact on women in low-income areas? Lastly, she asked what steps were being taken to combat harmful stereotypes perpetuated by the media.

46. **Ms. Pimentel** welcomed the adoption of Comprehensive Act No. 348, but noted that it was not effectively implemented, as apparently only 30 of the 10,579 complaints that had been filed since its adoption had led to convictions. Had the Act had an impact on the number of cases of violence against women? She asked whether the special police force against violence was properly staffed. What was the source of its funding? Information was needed on the impact of the registry on domestic violence. She expressed concern about conciliation and asked what mechanisms were in place to protect victims of violence. Were comprehensive support services available to women victims of violence? Did forensics teams receive training in gender-based violence? What measures had the State party taken to combat and eradicate all forms of violence against women?

47. **Ms. Jahan** said that trafficking was a cause for concern, noting that most victims of trafficking were women and girls who were trafficked for the purposes of forced prostitution and labour. Had the State party studied the extent of trafficking in women and children or the causes of the recent increase in trafficking? What measures were being taken to improve the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and ethnicity? She asked whether anti-trafficking measures took into account the special needs of women victims and whether a formal mechanism was in place to monitor and assess the impact of the measures that had been taken. What steps were being taken to raise awareness of trafficking among rural and indigenous populations and to establish a national registry of employment agencies? How many anti-trafficking police units had been established in indigenous communities? Were there any shelters for victims of trafficking outside of La Paz? Lastly, she enquired whether any special measures were in place to protect refugees and asylum seekers, who were particularly vulnerable to trafficking, and whether any support mechanisms were in place for women trying to escape prostitution.

48. **Ms. Velasco Condori** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the Plurinational State of Bolivia had a law on human trafficking and smuggling and had been able to identify and monitor common trafficking routes with a view to rescuing victims. It had recently signed a bilateral agreement with Peru to eradicate human trafficking and smuggling and was close to signing a similar agreement with Argentina.

49. **Ms. Cornejo Quevedo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the Government had signed the agreements in order to maximize coordination. With regard to prostitution, the Government had recently set up a working group to look into the issue.

50. **Ms. Velasco Condori** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), in response to the question concerning conciliation, said that conciliation was an alternative form of

settling disputes and allowed for immediate settlements in civil matters, which saved the parties time and money. The Plurinational State of Bolivia was therefore training more conciliators in order to make conciliation more readily available. Conciliators, as well as lawyers, forensics experts, psychiatrists and social workers, had to master at least two languages, such as Spanish, Guarani, Aymara and Quechua, in order to provide multilingual services. The services they provided were important in view of the complexities of the legal system, as people needed to receive clear information on the legal matters affecting them.

51. **Ms. Suxo Iturry** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the number of refugees in the Plurinational State of Bolivia was not large and that most of them came from Peru. The State party had seen a significant increase in trafficking over the past decade and recognized that trafficking was a complex, transnational issue. The Plurinational State of Bolivia would welcome guidance from the Committee on best practices to combat trafficking, based on the successes of other countries.

52. **Ms. Jahan** agreed that trafficking was a transnational problem that affected many countries. The Committee commended the State party on its work with other countries in the region and its interest in exploring and adopting best practices. Noting that some victims of trafficking had been imprisoned or convicted for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of their status as trafficking victims, she asked what measures were being taken to ensure that victims of trafficking who wished to cooperate with the authorities were not prosecuted. Were there formal witness protection programmes for victims who cooperated with the authorities?

53. **Ms. Pimentel** said that the delegation had spoken about conciliation used in civil cases but not in cases of violence against women which, according to alternative sources, was on the increase in Bolivia. In addition, statistics indicated that a number of women suffered from sexual abuse in the State party from an early age. She wished to know whether a strategy was in place to protect women from such violence, particularly in their homes and in educational institutions. As for women deprived of liberty, she wondered whether gender-sensitive policies in that regard had been implemented.

54. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that, although the modification of sociocultural mores had been enshrined in law, some form of intercultural dialogue needed to be established in order to ensure universal understanding of women's rights. There should also be more restrictive provisions on the violation of rights of young people in the workplace, an issue requiring more detailed discussion with indigenous populations. Furthermore, she wished to know how the Plurinational Observatory of Education Quality responded when notified of discriminatory practices, and how it sought to counter the dissemination of damaging images of women in the media.

55. **Ms. Al-Dosari** said that she would appreciate a comment on what measures were being taken to address customary and tribal practices in the State party that violated the Constitution and were harmful to women.

56. **Ms. Velasco Condori** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), referring to the issue of conciliation, said that Act No. 348, the Comprehensive Act to Guarantee Women a Life Free of Violence, prohibited conciliation in cases of violence that compromised the life, safety or sexual integrity of women. Moreover, under article 3 of the Act, conciliation achieved as a result of pressure exerted by those who received the complaint was not legally recognized. She had previously made reference to conciliation in civil cases because, in recent years, it had become common practice for parties to turn to the criminal law system to address such cases, resulting in the overburdening of criminal courts. Therefore, conciliation should be used as a means of alleviating such a burden where possible but never in cases of violence.

57. **Ms. Cornejo Quevedo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the Family Code stipulated that the minimum age of marriage was 18 years or 16 years in exceptional cases when parental consent was given. With regard to child labour, the Children's and Young Persons' Code stipulated that the minimum age of work was 10 years. Child labour was mediated and regulated by the Ombudsman for Children which acted as the main monitoring body. It was currently developing statistics on the number of children who needed to work because of their living conditions and the outcome of that research was pending. In reference to the media, the State party had established a protocol to address the question of the image of women in the media. The protocol aimed to raise awareness of the issue and had been developed by the Ministry of Communications. Under Act No. 348, the dissemination of damaging images of women in the media was considered systemic violence. It had not yet been criminalized but was regulated by the Ministries of Communications and Justice.

58. **Ms. Suxo Iturry** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), referring to the issue of women deprived of liberty, said that delays in legal proceedings exacerbated the situation for women in particular because they often had dependent children. The Government hoped that a forthcoming judges' summit would help to resolve the issue. The presidential decree granting pardons to prisoners had focused particularly on women with dependent children and a similar enactment of a few years earlier had also mainly benefited women. Another important issue was the construction of new internment facilities for women deprived of liberty.

59. As to the forums in which customary law was discussed, she said that the discussion took place at community level. While it was true that there were certain customs of indigenous peoples that contravened national law, the Government was seeking to implement a law that would respect indigenous customs as it was important to recognize and preserve the country's roots and traditions. On the question of media stereotypes, she said that a law had been developed by the Ministry of Communications which focused on journalistic ethics. Workshops and events had also been held with media directors with the aim of raising awareness of harmful advertising. As for measures taken against tribal practices, efforts had been made to focus on respect for life, a principle enshrined in the Constitution.

60. **Ms. Velasco Condori** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), referring to the issue of deprivation of liberty, said that the presidential decree granting pardons had been broadened in an attempt to curb prison overcrowding. The Government was also working with provincial courts of justice to ensure that hearings were held expeditiously. In cases of petty crime in particular, priority was given to ensuring that the necessary documents, such as identification papers, were promptly placed before the court in order to help inmates avoid pitfalls in legal proceedings and thus secure reduced or suspended sentences. Furthermore, since 2006 efforts had been undertaken to tackle the issue of pregnant women in prison.

61. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao said that, despite increased participation of women in the legislative branch of Government, female participation in the executive branch was poor. Women constituted a very low percentage of mayors and the number of female ministers had fallen since the new cabinet had been formed. She wondered what the State party was doing to address the situation and whether any temporary special measures would be put in place to improve women's participation.

62. Moreover, the Committee would appreciate information on how the Government was putting into practice the commendable Political Harassment and Violence against Women Act (Act No. 243), whether resources had been allocated for its enforcement, and what measures had been introduced to address complaints of political harassment or violence. The Committee was concerned that the Electoral System Act protected only candidates, not those who had been elected, from political harassment,

particularly given the increase in such cases between 2010 and 2012, and wondered whether any measures were in place to address the issue or whether there were plans to amend the law with a view to protecting all women in the political sphere. Furthermore, indigenous women faced obstacles to political participation on account of gender stereotyping and linguistic barriers. It would be useful to know whether concrete measures had been taken to encourage indigenous women to participate in political life at all levels and to use their native language, particularly since the Constitution provided for the use of indigenous languages in the political sphere.

63. **Ms. Cornejo Quevedo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that Act No. 243 focused on administrative, penal and constitutional provisions to protect the rights of women involved in political activity. However, one of the shortcomings of the legislation lay in the area of practical enforcement. Regulations to the Act were under consideration which would provide a mechanism for reporting cases of political harassment under the comprehensive Act to Guarantee Women a Life Free of Violence, Act No. 348. Nonetheless, some cases of political harassment had already been resolved under the constitutional provisions of Act No. 243.

64. **Ms. Suxo Iturry** (Bolivia) said that the drop in the number of female ministers was not a cause for concern but merely the result of changes in cabinet membership, although she agreed that positive discrimination should be implemented in the executive branch of Government to improve female participation. Despite the fact that there was not a significant number of female mayors in Bolivia, the Association of Women Councillors of Bolivia (ACOBOL) had released a bulletin stating that the principle of parity and alternation had been achieved in the national legislature. With regard to indigenous candidates, they were able to take up positions even if they did not speak Spanish and were represented in all employment sectors.

65. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that she would have liked to receive more information on the participation of women representing the State party internationally in high-ranking diplomatic positions and embassies.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.